

Good Government

It

is the American people who pay the price for government corruption. In fact, the cost of corruption is felt every day by families in Southwest Washington. Middle-class families are desperately trying to pay higher bills with lower wages. Meanwhile, special interests continue to reap lavish tax breaks and extravagant rewards. As long as K Street lobbyists control the halls of Congress, the priorities of the American people will continue to go unaddressed.

Congress must try and restore the American people's trust in the political process. Special interest money clouds the debate on too many issues of importance, distracting the public from the merits and values on which a candidate should be judged. The cost of running for federal office has become so great - and the threat of huge third party expenditures is so real - that Congressional candidates are forced to devote a disproportionate amount of their time to raising money rather than discussing issues critical to the American people, like health care reform, Social Security, and improvements to our local schools.

Reforming Lobbying and Ethics Rules

Congressman Baird has voted numerous times in support of comprehensive reforms which ensure transparency and adherence to the highest ethical standards in government. The reforms supported by Congressman Baird include:

- Banning Members or employees of the House from knowingly accepting a gift from a registered lobbyist.
- Prohibiting Members from influencing employment decisions or practices in the private sector on the basis of partisan political affiliation.
- Prohibiting a Member or employee of the House from accepting a reimbursement for transportation, lodging or other expense related to a trip during which the Member or employee is accompanied by a registered lobbyist. This rule also requires that Members or employees seek prior approval from the Ethics Committee for any trip and certify that the trip will not be financed in part by a registered lobbyist or an entity that retains or employs a lobbyist.

- Prohibiting a Member or employee of the House from using personal, official, or campaign funds to pay for a flight on a non governmental airplane that is not licensed by the FAA to operate for compensation or hire.
- Requiring the Ethics Committee to provide annual ethic training to each Member and employee of the House.
- Providing for accountability and transparency in earmarks by requiring that the name of requesting Members be included in legislation.
- Denying Congressional pensions to Members of Congress who have been convicted of certain felonies.
- Requiring campaign committees to disclose "bundled" contributions by lobbyists.

Congressman Baird is also a cosponsor of separate legislation that would establish an independent House Ethics Commission to investigate complaints and allegations against Members of Congress for improper conduct.

Reading Legislation

Congressman Baird recognizes that his votes in Congress have consequences for the residents of Southwest Washington and Americans everywhere. That is why he believes Members of Congress and the public should have an opportunity to read and fully understand legislation and its impact before it is brought to the House floor for a vote. Unfortunately, far too many bills - totaling hundreds of pages of text and costing hundreds of billions of dollars - have been voted on only hours after they are made available to Members.

Congressman Baird has introduced legislation that would strengthen House Rules to ensure that all Members of Congress have sufficient time to read legislation before a vote. His bill also requires that legislation be made available to the general public on the Internet so that those impacted by the legislation would have an opportunity to review it and offer input to their elected officials before it is voted on.

Stopping Insider Trading on Capitol Hill

When someone buys or sells stocks based on nonpublic information that they receive from inside a company, they are guilty of insider trading. However, it is not currently a violation of insider trading laws to buy or sell stocks based on nonpublic information obtained from inside the Congress.

Congressman Baird

believes that the buying or selling of stock based on this type of nonpublic information has the potential to unfairly profit those inside Congress or those with connections to Congress at the expense of those who do not have access to this same information. He is very concerned that privileging a select group of investors with confidential information about congressional activity is not only a misuse of a congressional office, but also undermines investor confidence in the fairness and integrity of the securities market.

To stop this practice, Congressman Baird introduced the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge (S.T.O.C.K.) Act. His legislation:

- Prohibits Members of Congress, Congressional staff, or Executive Agency employee from buying or selling stocks, bonds, or commodities based on nonpublic information they obtain because of their status.
- Prohibits anyone outside of Congress or the Executive Branch from making investment decisions on nonpublic information received from a Member of Congress, congressional staff, or Executive Branch employee.
- Prohibits Members or staff from disclosing material nonpublic information with individuals or firms if they believe that information will be used to inform stock trading decisions.
- Requires Members of Congress and staff who are subject to financial disclosure requirements to report the purchase, sale, or exchange of any stock, bond, or commodity transaction exceeding \$1,000 within 90 days.
- Requires firms that specialize in "political intelligence" who obtain their information directly from Congress or the Executive Branch to register with the House and Senate, as lobbying firms are now required to do.

Congressman Baird believes that Members of Congress and congressional staffers should be concerned first and foremost with serving the American people and not with fattening their stock portfolios on the taxpayer's dime.

Congressman Baird has also introduced the Political Intelligence Disclosure Act. This legislation would shed light on the way the political intelligence industry does business. With what started as only a handful of firms in the 1970s, the political intelligence

community has grown into a \$40 million dollar industry that takes nonpublic legislative information from members of Congress and federal employees to turn it into trading tips for hedge funds and corporate companies. Congressman Baird's legislation would require that political intelligence firms disclose their clients, profits, and activities, in the same way that lobbyists are required to do under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995.

Supporting Campaign Finance Reform

Congressman Baird supports efforts to reform our campaign finance system. Congressman Baird strongly supported the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), which was signed into law in March of 2002. The bill bans all soft money contributions to national parties. It also bars unions, corporations and non-profit groups from buying broadcast "issue" ads that refer to a federal candidate shortly before an election.

On August 6, 2003, Congressman Baird, along with a bipartisan group of 22 members of Congress, sent an amicus brief to the Supreme Court in support of BCRA. The amicus brief outlined the legal and political rationale for the legislation and encouraged the Supreme Court to sustain the will of the Legislative branch and the majority of citizens that supported BCRA. Ultimately, on December 10, 2003, the Supreme Court agreed with this position and upheld BCRA. While the Supreme Court ruling is certainly good news, there is still plenty of work to be done. Congressman Baird will continue to fight to protect the rights of individuals over those of special interest groups.

Reforming Elections

Congressman Baird feels strongly about improving our federal election system to ensure that every vote is counted and that every American who is eligible to vote is afforded that right. He believes that all voting systems need to be backed up with paper ballots to ensure accountability and to protect the integrity of our elections. He is a cosponsor of legislation that would improve voter verification processes, shorten waiting times for voters, and create other standards intended to guarantee that the right to vote is protected and that ballot-counting methods are reliable and accurate.

Providing for Continuity of Representation

Members

of Congress have a duty to ensure that our government will continue to function following a catastrophe or national crisis. Since September 11th, there has been limited discussion of how to address the potential for a catastrophic level of vacancies in Congress. If Congress does not

act, a major attack on a large U.S. city or heavily-populated area could leave an entire region of the country without representation; the party make-up of Congress could be significantly altered; and Congress could be left unable to carry out its responsibilities. There is currently no workable plan in place to ensure the continuity of representation in Congress.

Congressman Baird recognizes the importance of addressing this unresolved problem. He has introduced a constitutional amendment that would ensure that mass vacancies in the House and Senate could be filled immediately after they occur to ensure the continuity of representation until special elections could be held. He will continue to raise awareness about the urgency of addressing this problem.

House Committee on Government Reform

House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct

Select Bipartisan Committee to
Investigate the Preparation for and
Response to Hurricane Katrina

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Good Government Groups